

Collaborative Solutions Corporation
P.O. Box 69
Montpelier, VT
05601

June 16, 2006

Sharon Moffatt, RN, MSN
Commissioner,
VT Department of Health
108 Cherry St.
Burlington, VT 05401

Dear Commissioner Moffat,

Enclosed is the application by Collaborative Solutions Corporation, a new entity under the direction of Clara Martin Center, Howard Center for Human Services, and Washington County Mental Health Services, for a Certificate of Approval for a new residential program. This program will be the realization of The Vermont State Hospital Future Planning Advisory Committee plan for the first of two proposed Community Recovery Residence care facilities for severely mentally ill adults. CSC has been working on this project with a private developer, Holmberg Properties, since early this year and has located a very positively reviewed site at the Autumn Harvest Inn located in Williamstown, Vermont.

The application will address a variety of issues of concern to the Corporation, the three sponsoring agencies and the State of Vermont. However, of equal or greater importance in concerns of consumers who might use the facility, and local residents of Williamstown who would provide the community environment that the residents of the project would reside in.

The input of consumers and family members should be a part of any new programming by community agencies. In the development of the CRR proposal all three agencies presented the model to their Local Program Standing Committees and discussed it with consumers and families individually. As well, though at an earlier stage of development, consumers, Board of Directors members, Local Program Standing Committee members, and family members involved with the Counseling Services of Addison County, and with Northeast Kingdom Human Services also reviewed and endorsed the concept of these projects. In addition on March 24th of this year, the VT Council of Developmental and Mental Health Services sponsored the second meeting--the 1st was one year ago—of all the CRT Local Program Standing Committees to ask for comments on the CRR proposal.

Though comments were offered to improve certain aspects of the proposal, all these groups have strongly endorsed this model of recovery, as have NAMI and Vermont Psychiatric Survivors.

Since March of this year myself and Peter Holmberg, as well as various members of the three agencies, and the Division of Mental Health have participated in community meetings in Williamstown to discuss the project. On March 20th Mr. Holmberg, Paul Dupre, and Beth Tanzman met with a local development group—the Williamstown Economic Development Council to discuss our plans. Later that same day we also presented our initial plan to the Williamstown Select board to discuss the plan.

On March 28th we held a community wide meeting at the Williamstown High School that was attended by over 60 persons. A final meeting was held on April 10th when we met with immediately adjoining neighbors of the property, and then again with the Economic Development Committee. The First meeting with the Development council was not publicly advertised, however the Select board, high school, neighbor, and 2nd Development Council meeting were publicly advertised and attendance strongly encouraged. The combined presence of citizens at these 5 meetings is estimated to be about 150, though some persons attended more than one meeting.

In addition to these efforts, an article was written and placed in the local school paper to inform the community of our plans. In addition the CRR plans were also featured in the local Times-Argus, The Burlington Free Press, WTPZ Channel 5, and WCAX Channel 3. I think it an accurate characterization that we were challenged by the town citizens to provide a detailed and responsible plan of care for the CRR that would not endanger or negatively impact on the town. By the last public meeting with the Development Council a town select board member informed us that we had presented a sound plan, with consistent answers to questions, and that he felt town citizens were on the whole accepting of the plan.

All of the above is certainly not to say there are not reservations on the behalf of some citizens; however, in the 60 days since that meeting we have received one phone call questioning the need for CRR and at least 20, most from town residents, seeking employment at the site. As well, in the neighborhood meeting we ended there with one of the neighbors wanting to volunteer time to visit residents.

From our perspective as developers, promoters, and providers this project has been reviewed extensively by the public, consumers and families, the Futures Committee, all the CRT Directors and Standing Committees. These reviews have been consistently positive remarks on the need for a CRR like program, and on the specific location and structure of the one in Williamstown. Based on this feedback it is our sense that our plan is one that meets the needs of the population moving out of Brooks Rehabilitation Unit, and it will develop into a model program for the state as well.

Please contact me at (802) 223-6328 should you have any questions or need further information on this project.

Sincerely,

Michael Hartman,
Development Director

CC: 4 Copies to VDH